



HARISCHANDRA

THE STORY OF THE MYTHOLOGICAL KING WHOSE
NAME IS SYNONYMOUS WITH TRUTH

No. 17 Rs. 5-00



India is a land of countless legends and stories. A few of them have survived the onslaught of time and remained alive over the centuries. One such story is that of Harischandra, the king whose honesty was unmatched.

The story as it has come down to us has many variations, from the original narration in the Markandeya Purana. The folk-singers, the poets and the dramatists, have all handled the story and have all added to it—an incident here, a character there—for greater effects. It is worth mentioning that Gandhiji whose experiments with truth are justly famous, was greatly inspired by a dramatic representation of this story, which he had seen in his boyhood.

The story of a king, who, pitted against forces immensely more powerful than himself faces them with an unflinching faith in integrity, is not only dramatic but ennobling. That is the secret of its everlasting appeal.

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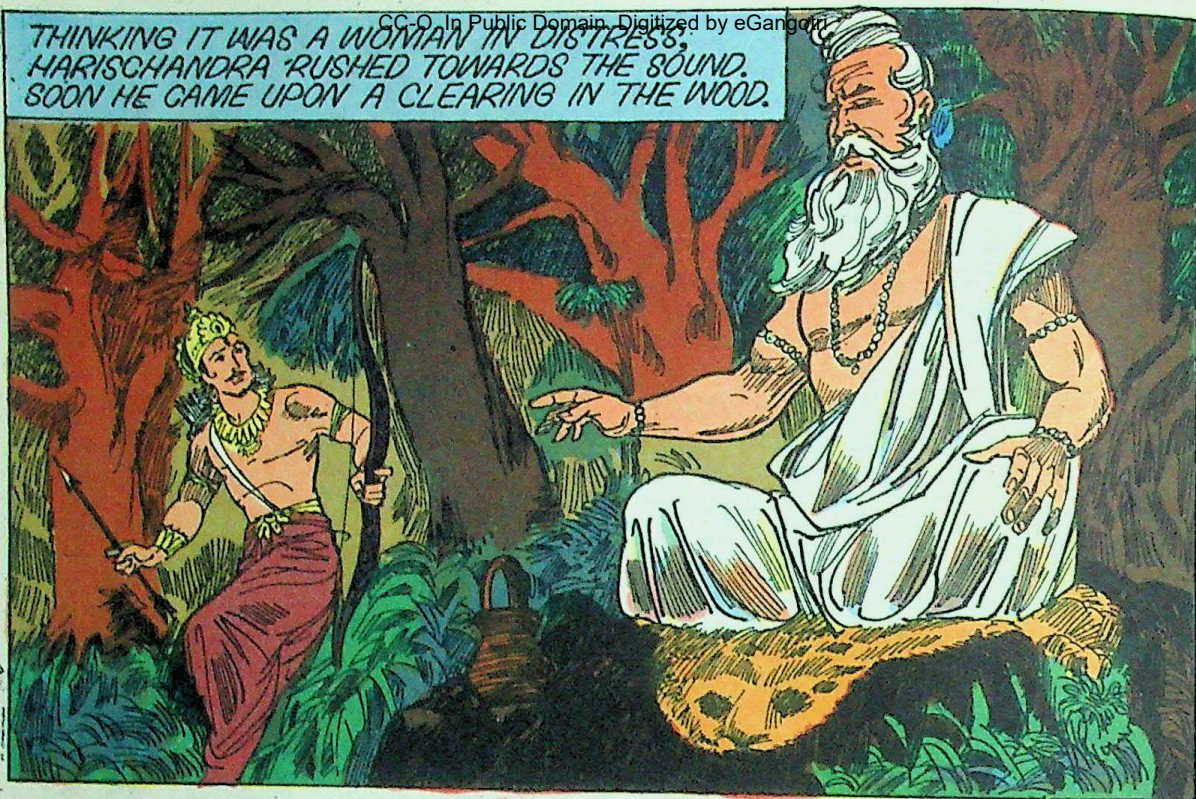
HARISCHANDRA

IT WAS THE ERA OF TRETA! HARISCHANDRA WAS THE KING OF AYODHYA! A RIGHTEOUS KING, HE WAS LOVED AND RESPECTED BY ALL HIS SUBJECTS. ONE DAY HARISCHANDRA HAD GONE TO THE FOREST WHEN HE HEARD A CRY...

HELP!

HELP!

THINKING IT WAS A WOMAN IN DISTRESS,
HARISCHANDRA RUSHED TOWARDS THE SOUND.
SOON HE CAME UPON A CLEARING IN THE WOOD.



WHAT HAVE I
DONE? THIS IS
SAGE VISHWA-
MITRA! WHAT
CAN I DO
NOW?

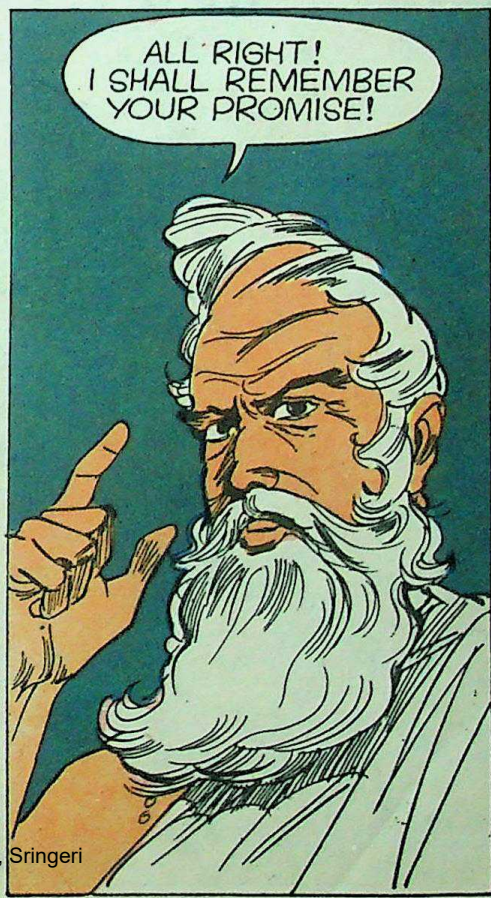
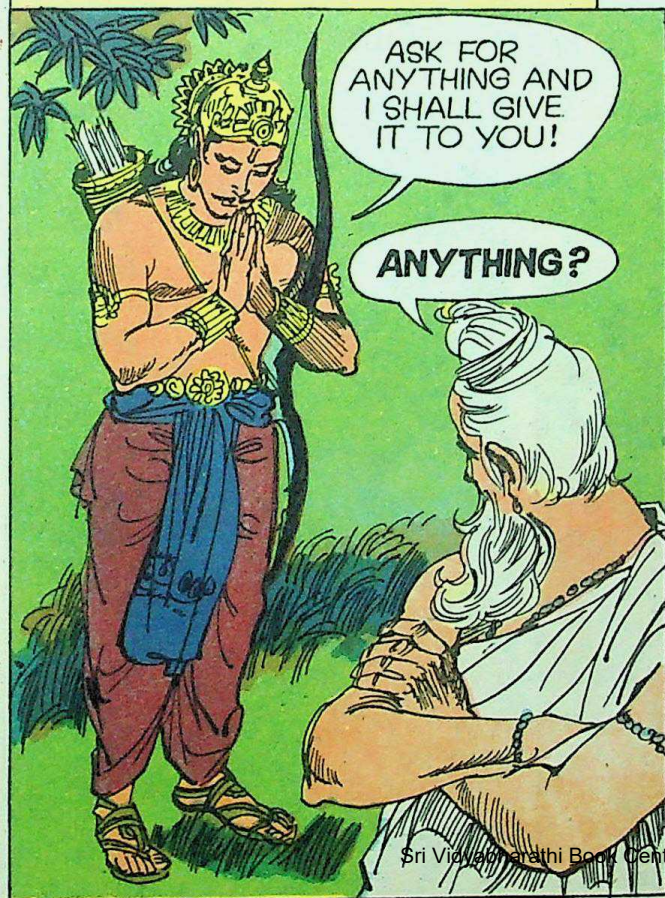


I AM SORRY
I DISTURBED
YOU, SIR! I
HEARD SOME-
ONE CRYING
FOR HELP!



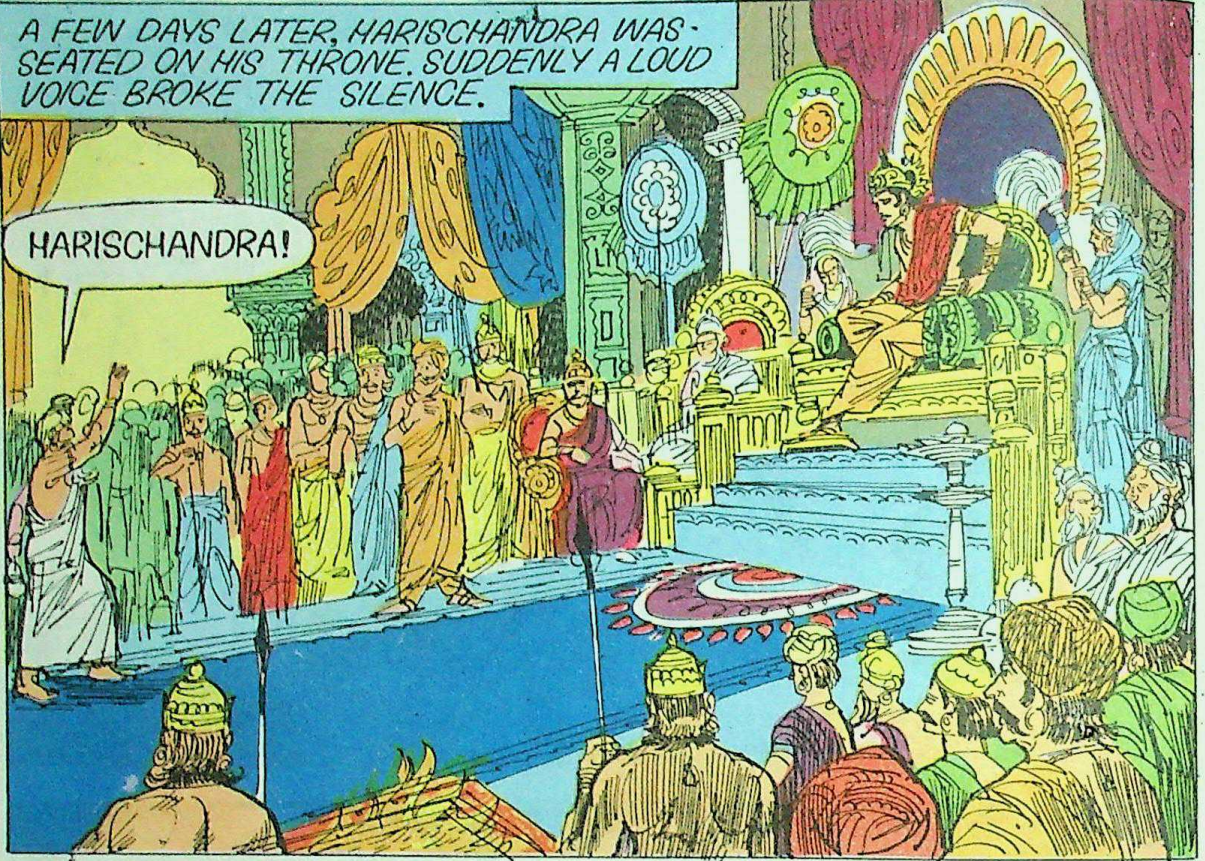


IN VAIN DID HARISCHANDRA PLEAD WITH THE SAGE.



A FEW DAYS LATER, HARISCHANDRA WAS SEATED ON HIS THRONE. SUDDENLY A LOUD VOICE BROKE THE SILENCE.

HARISCHANDRA!



AS VISHWAMITRA APPROACHED HIM, THE KING FELT UNEASY.



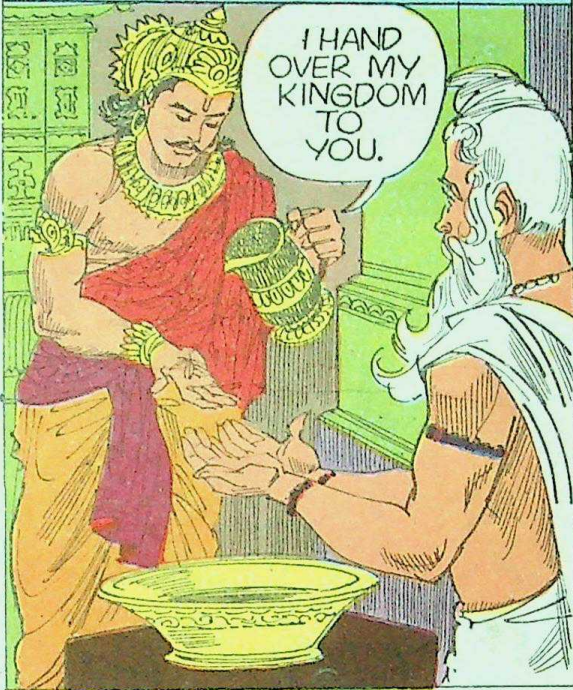
I HAVE COME FOR WHAT YOU PROMISED ME! I WANT YOUR KINGDOM!

MY KINGDOM?



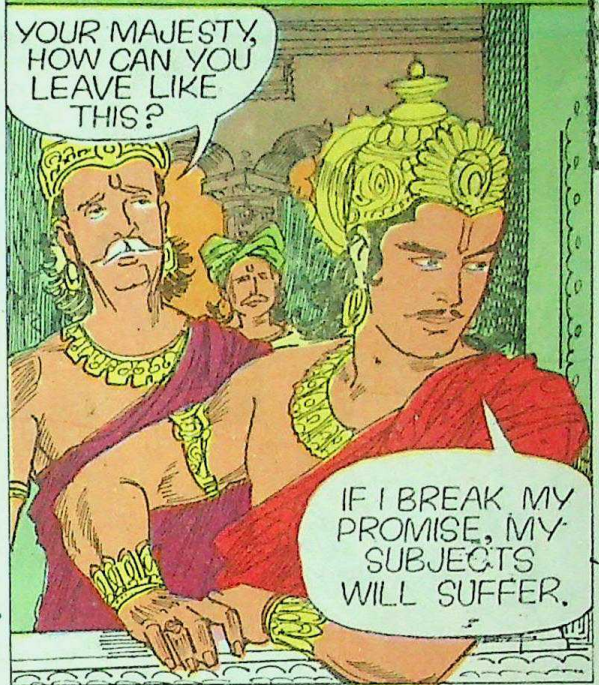
YES! IF YOU FAIL TO KEEP YOUR PROMISE, MY CURSE WILL COME UPON AYODHYA!

AS THE HUSHED COURTIER'S WATCHED, HARISCHANDRA TOOK THE SAGE INSIDE.



I HAND OVER MY KINGDOM TO YOU.

THE MINISTERS TRIED TO REASON WITH THE ABDICATING KING.



YOUR MAJESTY, HOW CAN YOU LEAVE LIKE THIS?

IF I BREAK MY PROMISE, MY SUBJECTS WILL SUFFER.

THE WHOLE CITY CAME TO THE ROAD TO WATCH THE THREE LONELY PEOPLE, HARISCHANDRA, QUEEN SAIYA AND PRINCE ROHITASINA, GOING AWAY. THEY ALL WEPT, FOR THEY LOVED THEIR KING, THEIR QUEEN AND THE YOUNG PRINCE.

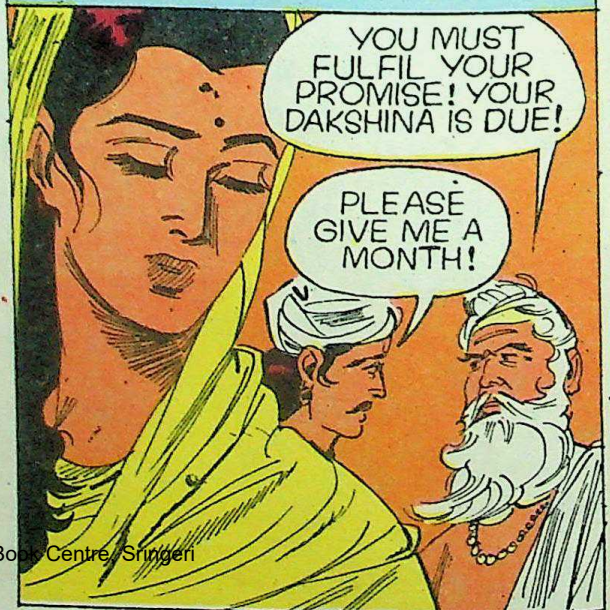
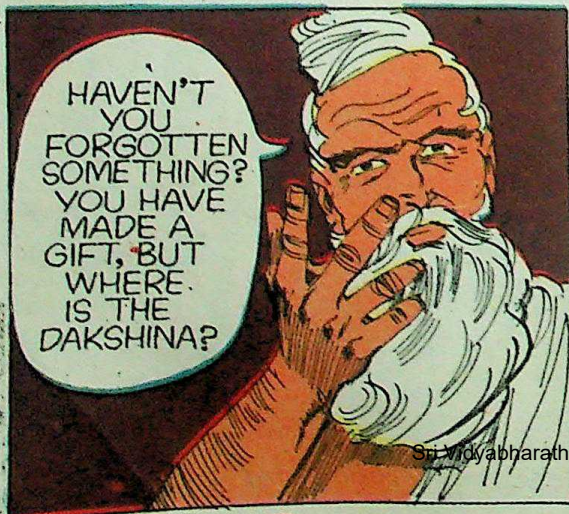


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AFTER WALKING A FEW MILES, HARISCHANDRA HEARD SOMEONE CALL HIM FROM BEHIND. HE TURNED ROUND TO FIND THE SAGE VISHWAMITRA COMING TOWARDS THEM.



WITH EVERY GIFT GIVEN, ONE HAD TO GIVE A DAKSHINA- AN HONORARI-UM! HARISCHANDRA HAD GIVEN AWAY EVERYTHING! HE HAD NOTHING LEFT FOR DAKSHINA!



THE KING AND THE QUEEN AND THE YOUNG PRINCE ROHITASWA ROAMED FROM LAND TO LAND. IT WAS A LONG JOURNEY, THROUGH FORESTS, THROUGH DESERTS.

ONE MONTH IS NEARLY OVER! I HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO GET ANY WORK. HOW SHALL I PAY THE SAGE?

HOW LONG SHALL WE ROAM LIKE THIS? THE CHILD IS TIRED.

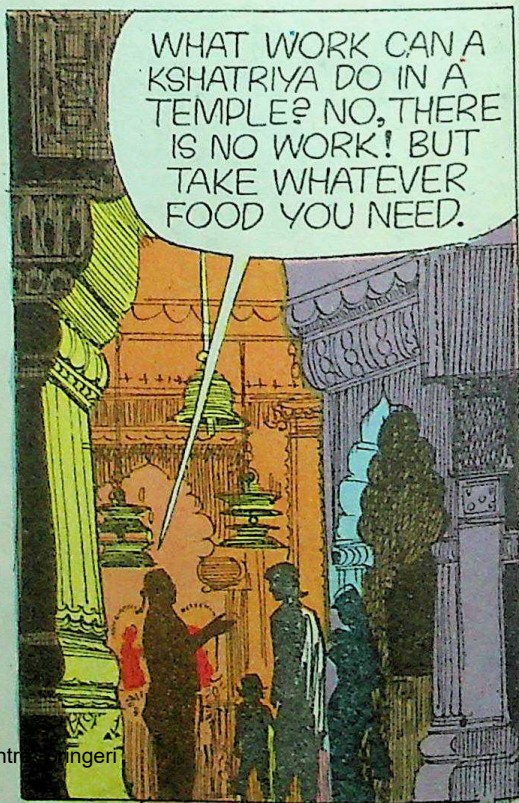
FATHER! WHY DIDN'T YOU BRING OUR CHARIOT?

AT LAST THEY REACHED THE TEMPLE CITY OF VARANASI.

I HOPE I SHALL GET SOME WORK HERE!

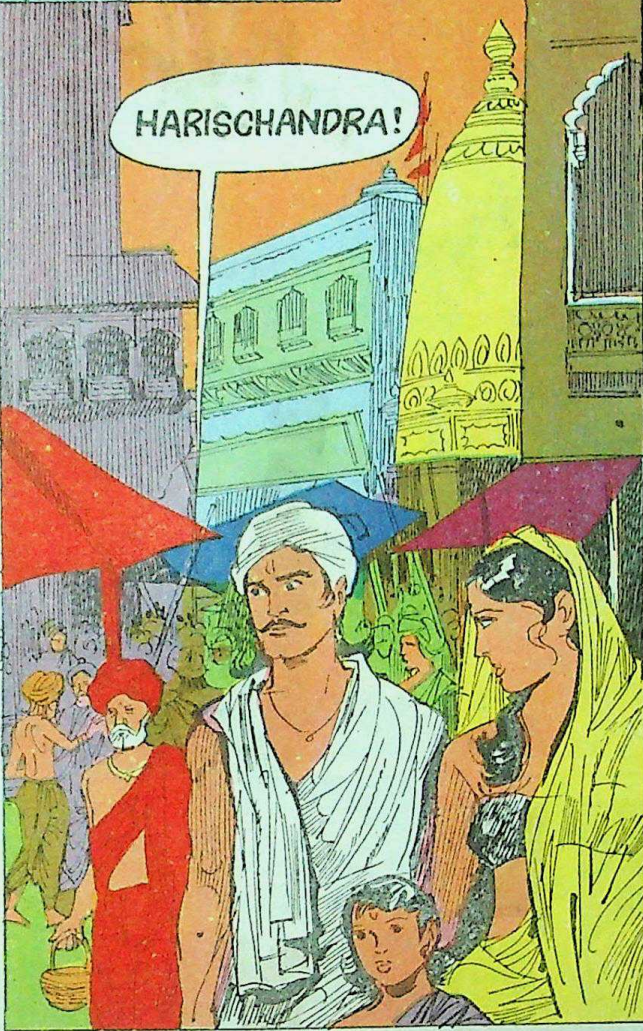
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THE TEMPLES OF VARANASI STOOD MARVELLOUS ON THE BANKS OF THE RIVER GANGA. THE TIRED KING AND HIS FAMILY WENT UP TO A TEMPLE.



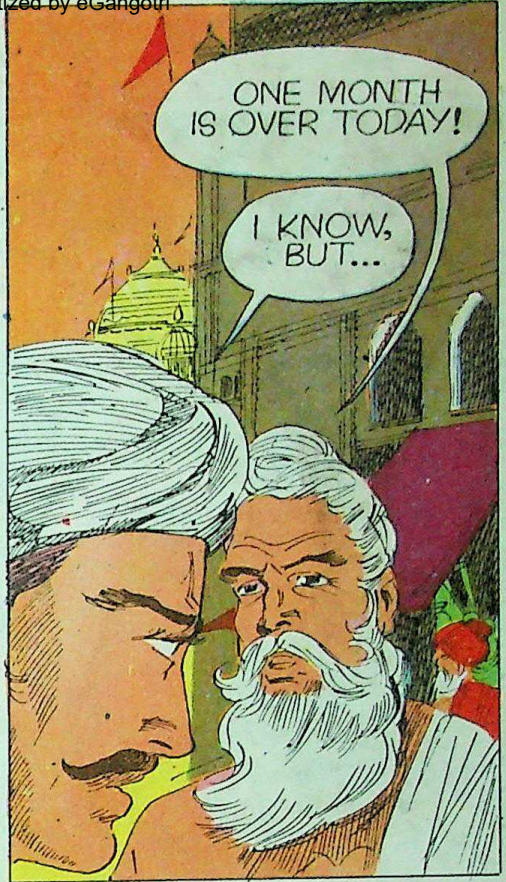
ONE DAY AS THE TRIO WALKED THROUGH THE CROWDED STREET, HARISCHANDRA HEARD A FAMILIAR VOICE.

HARISCHANDRA!

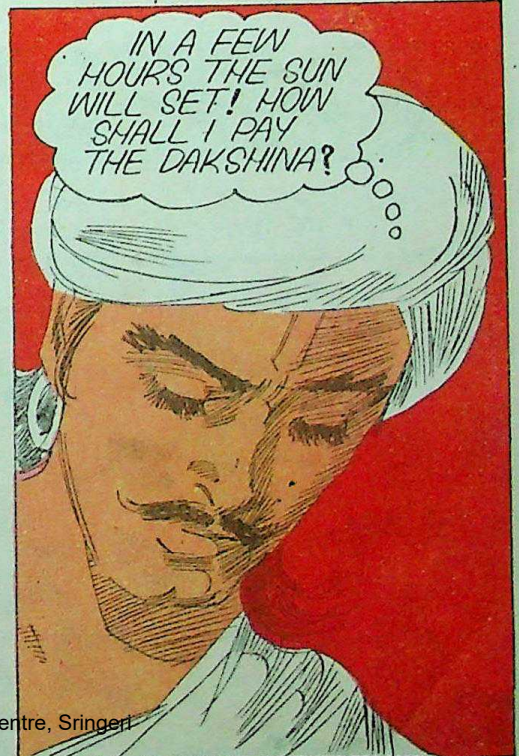


ONE MONTH IS OVER TODAY!

I KNOW, BUT...



IN A FEW HOURS THE SUN WILL SET! HOW SHALL I PAY THE DAKSHINA?



...THE DAY IS NOT YET OVER! PLEASE WAIT TILL NIGHT FALL.



ROHITASINA, THE YOUNG PRINCE, WAS A BRAVE BOY! HE HAD BORNE THE HARDSHIPS OF HIS PARENTS' EXILE WITH A SMILING FACE. BUT HIS YOUNG BODY COULD NOT BEAR THE STRAIN FOR LONG.



A FEW HOURS PASSED. THEN HARISCHANDRA CAME BACK. HE COULD NOT FIND ANY WORK.

TAKE THIS FOOD! I BROUGHT IT FROM THE TEMPLE!

DO WE HAVE TO BEG FOR OUR FOOD NOW?

THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY TO FULFIL MY PROMISE! I CAN SELL MYSELF!

OH, NO! NO!

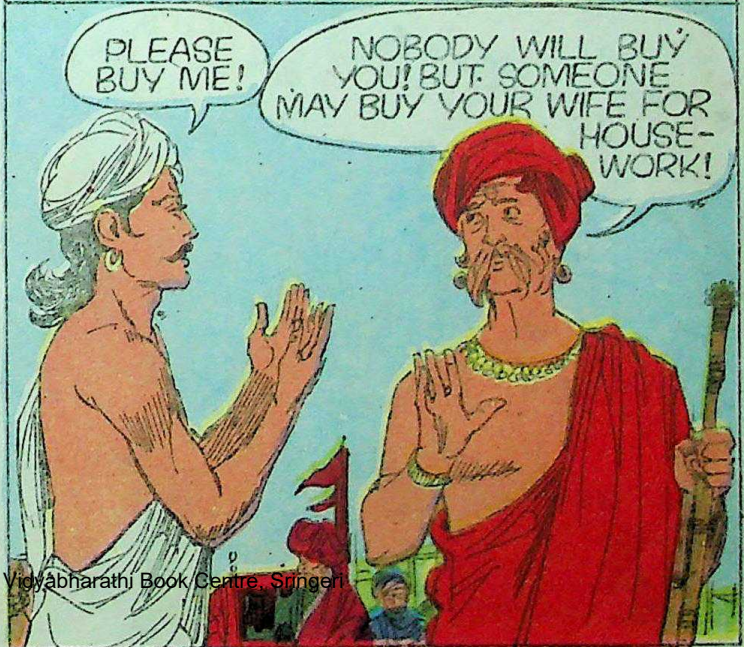
THE MARKETPLACE.



THE DESPERATE KING BE-SOUGHT MAN AFTER MAN.



STANDING UNDER THE MIDDAY SUN, HARISCHANDRA WAS CONSCIOUS OF ONLY THOSE WORDS BEATING IN HIS HEAD.



QUEEN, SAIYVA HAD HEARD WHAT THE PASSER-BY HAD SAID. SHE APPROACHED HER HUSBAND.

NO ONE WILL BUY YOU!
BUT YOU HAVE SOMETHING
ELSE FOR SALE.

WHAT
DO
YOU
MEAN?

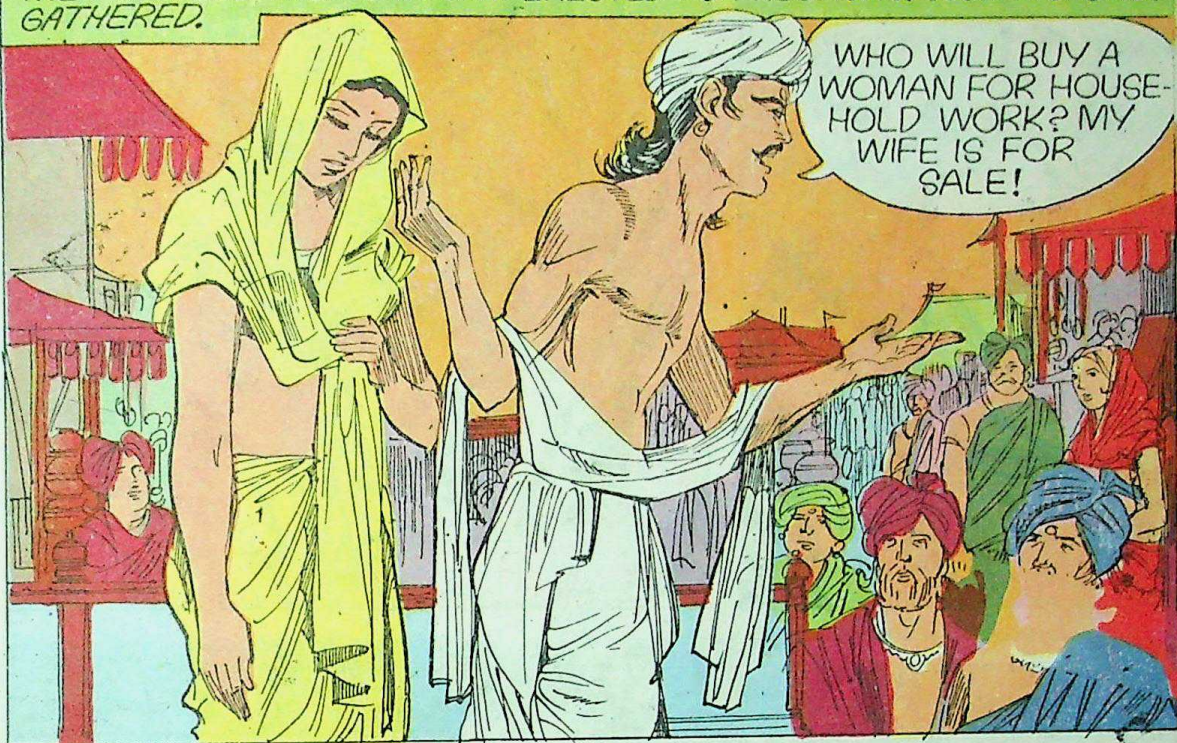
I HAVE GIVEN YOU
A SON! MY LIFE IS FULFILLED!
SELL ME AND PAY
YOUR DEBT!

DO YOU
KNOW
WHAT
YOU ARE
SAYING?
SELL
MY OWN
WIFE?

TRUTH IS MORE
IMPORTANT THAN
HUMAN BEINGS! YOU
MUST UPHOLD TRUTH!
DO YOU REMEMBER
WHAT THE
SAGE SAID?

YES,
I REMEMBER!

WITH A HEAVY HEART HARISCHANDRA WENT TO THE MARKET PLACE. THEY CLIMBED THE PLATFORM ERECTED FOR AUCTIONS. SOON A CROWD GATHERED.



**A BRAHMAN OFFERED
TO BUY THE QUEEN.**

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I WILL
TAKE
HER!

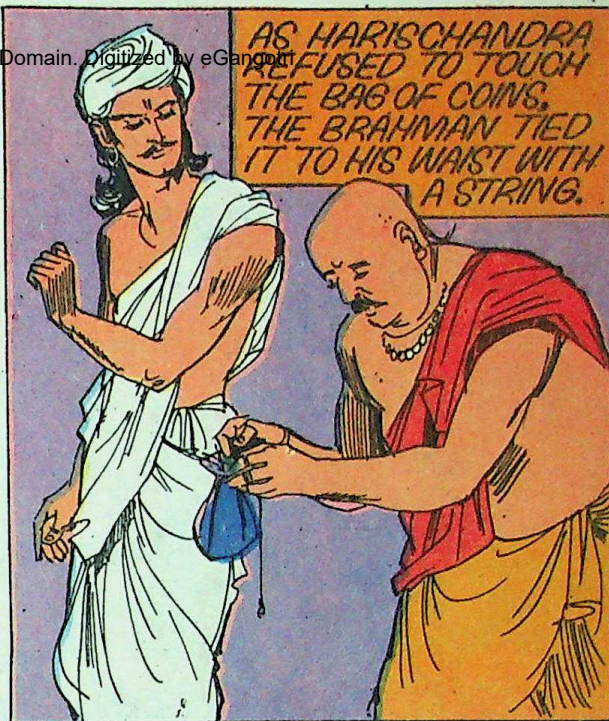
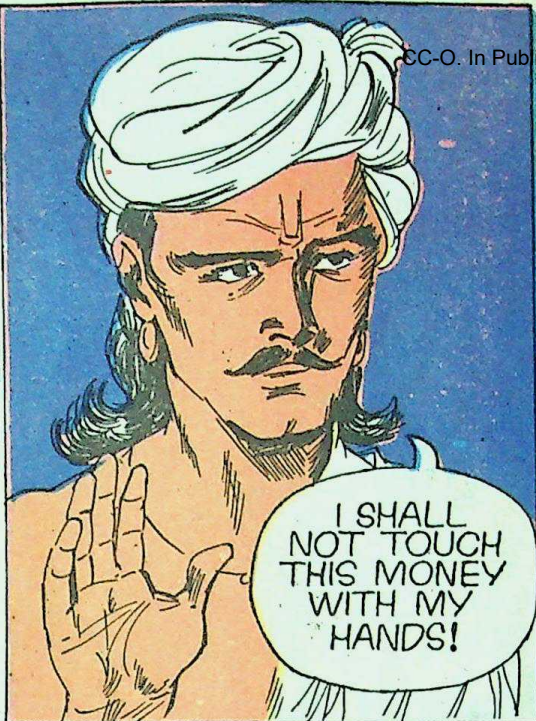
WHAT
WORK WILL
YOU
GIVE
HER?

SHE WILL
BE MY
WIFE'S
SERVANT.
WHAT IS
HER
PRICE?

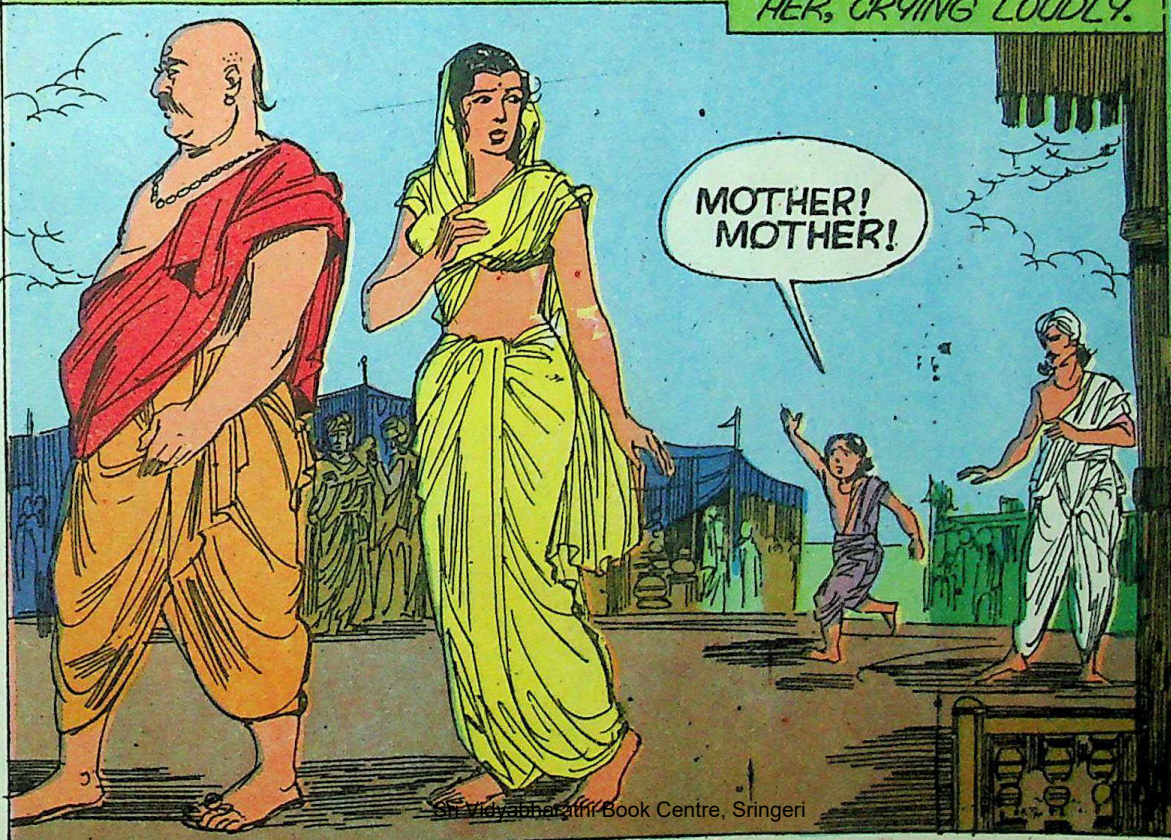
HOW CAN A MAN
FIX THE PRICE
OF HIS WIFE, THE
MOTHER OF
HIS SON?

THE BRAHMAN WAS DELIGHTED. HE
COULD OFFER ANY PRICE HE LIKED.

THEN TAKE THESE
FIVE HUNDRED GOLD
COINS AND GIVE UP ALL
CLAIM ON HER!



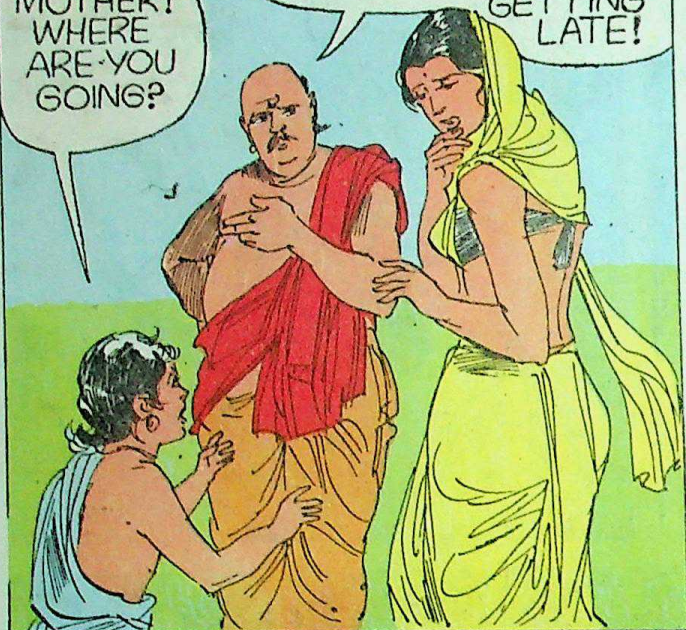
THE YOUNG PRINCE WAS BEWILDERED TO SEE HIS MOTHER GOING AWAY WITH THE OLD BRAHMAN! HE STARTED RUNNING AFTER HER, CRYING LOUDLY.



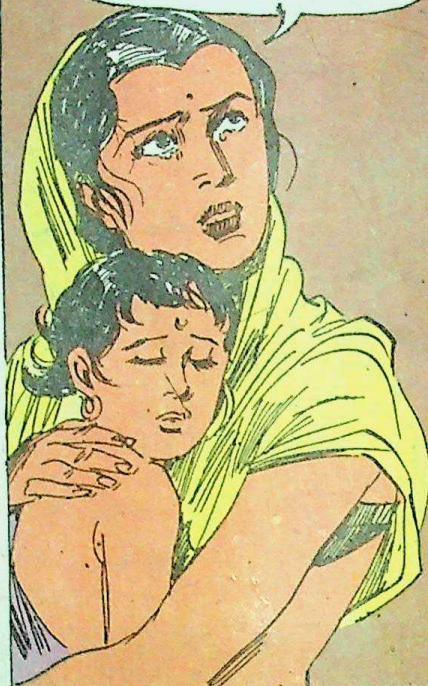
HEARING HER SON'S CRY, THE QUEEN'S
HEART WAS FILLED WITH PAIN!
SHE COULD NOT GO FARTHER!

MOTHER!
WHERE
ARE YOU
GOING?

COME ALONG! WE ARE
GETTING
LATE!



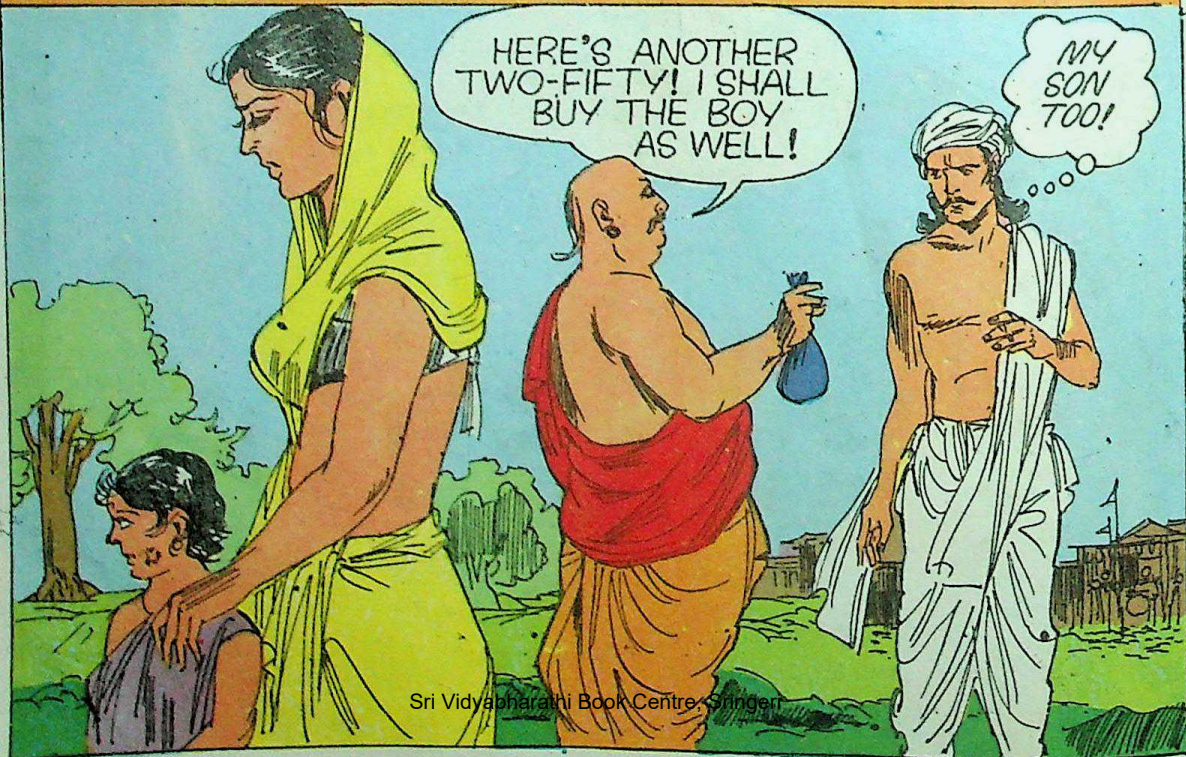
PLEASE LET ME
TAKE HIM WITH ME!
HE CAN'T LIVE
WITHOUT ME!



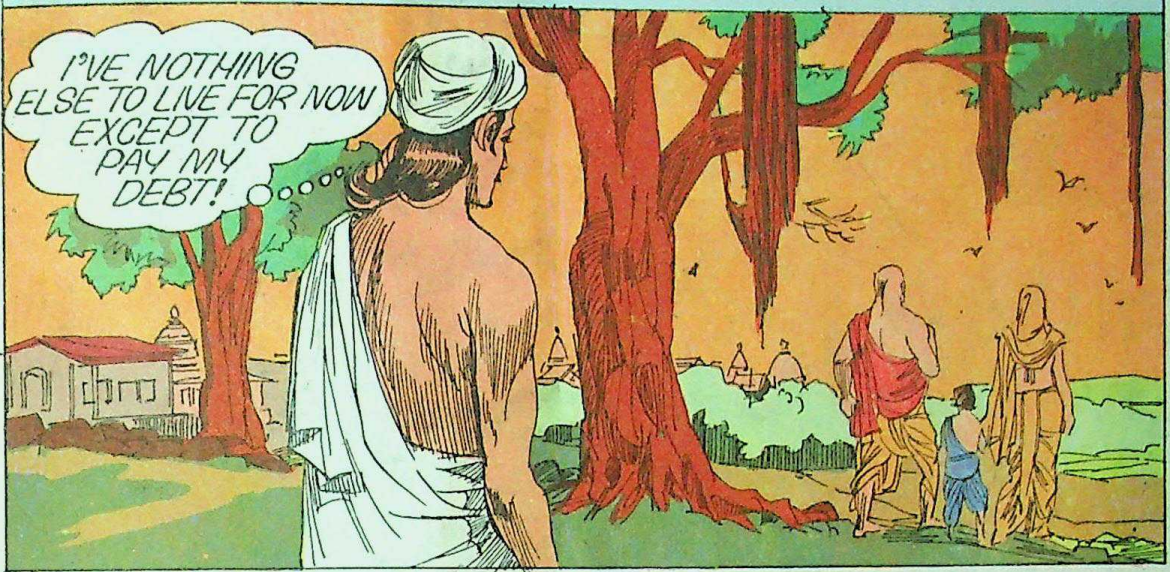
THE BRAHMAN WAS GLAD HE COULD BUY THE CHILD ALSO. HE
OFFERED SOME MORE MONEY AS THE PRICE OF YOUNG ROHITASWA.

HERE'S ANOTHER
TWO-FIFTY! I SHALL
BUY THE BOY
AS WELL!

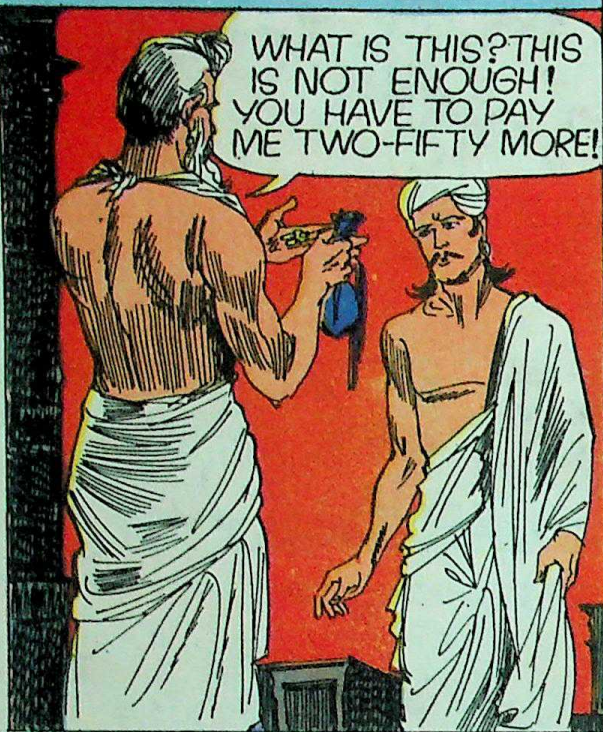
MY
SON
TOO!



HARISCHANDRA STOOD HELPLESSLY WATCHING HIS WIFE AND SON BEING TAKEN AWAY BY THE MAN WHO HAD BOUGHT THEM.



HARISCHANDRA UNTIED THE PURSE FROM HIS BELT AND GAVE IT TO THE SAGE.

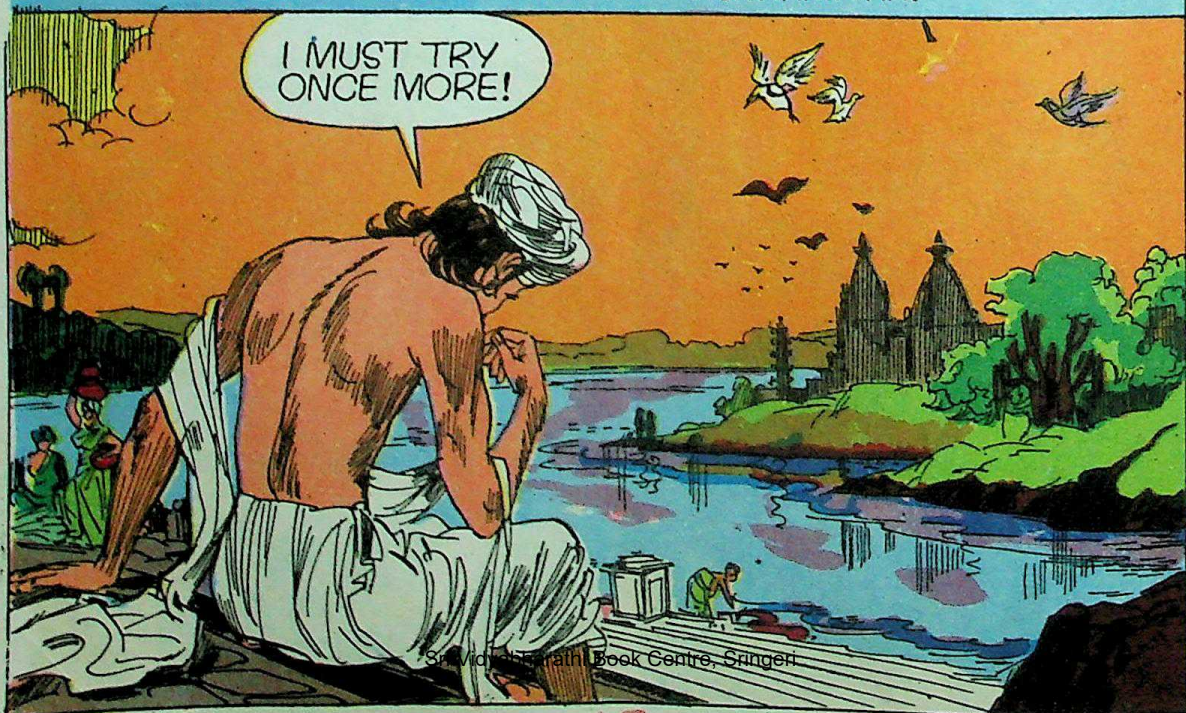


NOT ENOUGH? BUT I'VE NOTHING ELSE LEFT!

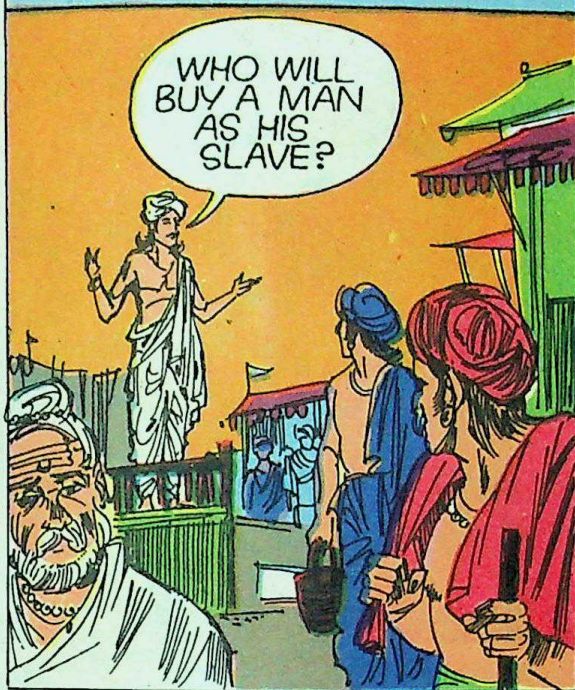
GET IT SOMEHOW. I SHALL COME AT NIGHT-FALL!



WITH A PAINFUL HEART HARISCHANDRA SAT DOWN ON THE STEPS BESIDE THE RIVER. THE DAY WAS WANING. HE KNEW NO WAY OF RAISING MORE MONEY FOR VISHNAMITRA.



RETURNING TO THE MARKET-PLACE, HARISCHANDRA STOOD ON THE PLATFORM AGAIN—THIS TIME A LONELY FIGURE.



THE PEOPLE RECOGNISED HIM. MANY LAUGHED.

YOU SOLD YOUR WIFE! IS YOUR NEED FOR MONEY SO GREAT?

YES!

BUT YOU WILL BE A BURDEN TO THE ONE THAT BUYS YOU!



NO ONE WOULD BUY THE LEAN MAN. A CHANDALA WHO WAS THE KEEPER OF THE CREMATION GROUND WAS WATCHING THE AUCTION.



YOU SCROLL AND A
STICK IN HIS HANDS!
HE IS A
CHANDALA!

WILL
YOU WORK
FOR ME?



HAVE I
COME TO SUCH
A LOIN STATE
THAT I HAVE TO
WORK WITH
CORPSES?



BUT HARISCHANDRA HAD NO CHOICE. THE
DAY WOULD BE OVER SOON AND THEN
VISHNAMITRA WOULD COME FOR
HIS MONEY.

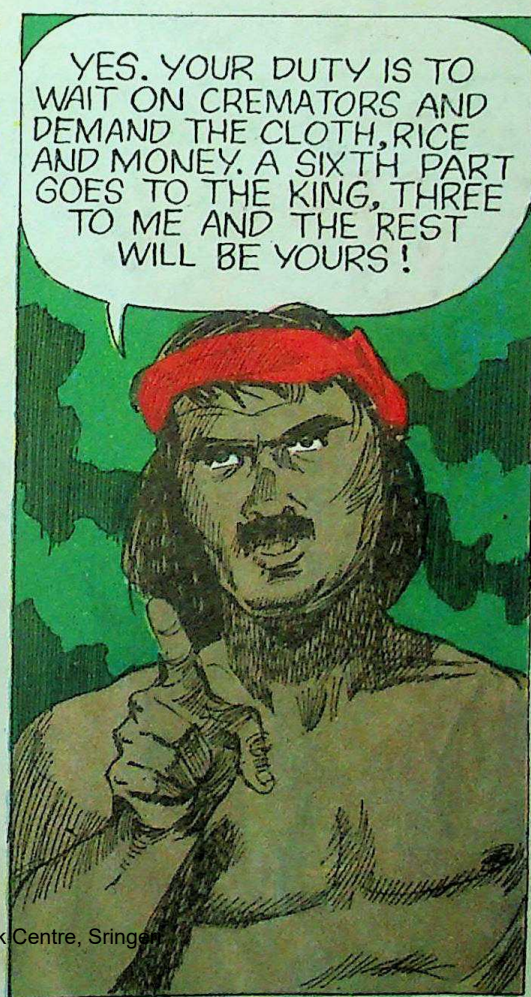
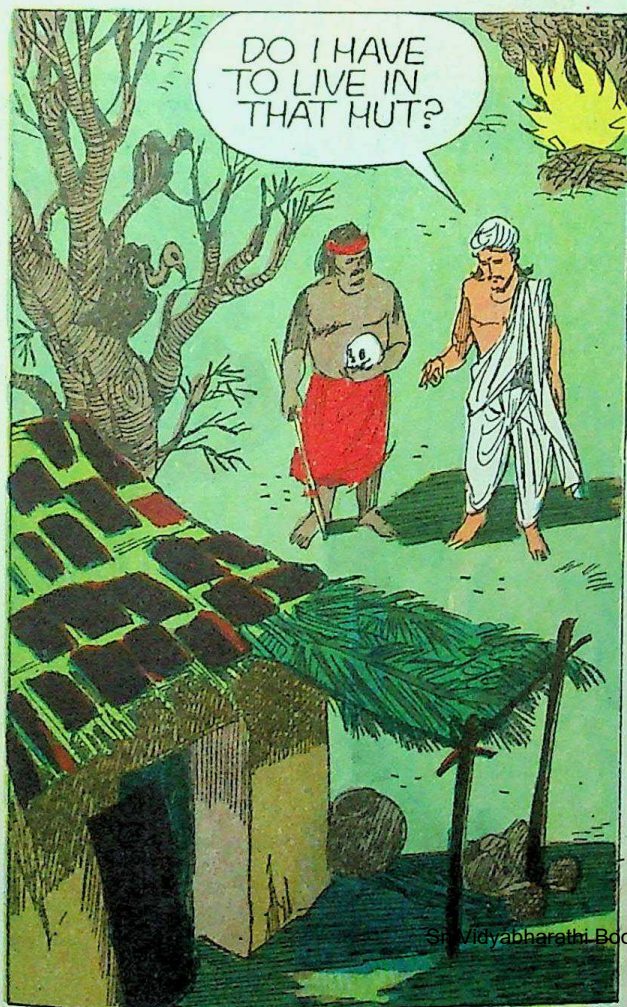
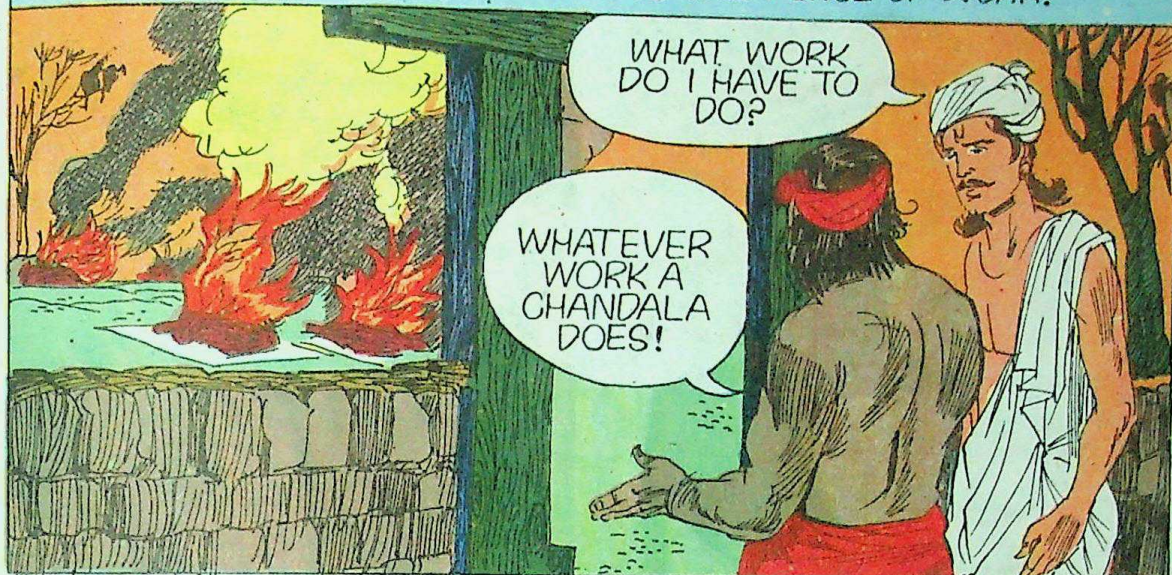
YOU'LL HAVE TO PAY
ME TWO HUNDRED
AND FIFTY
GOLD COINS!

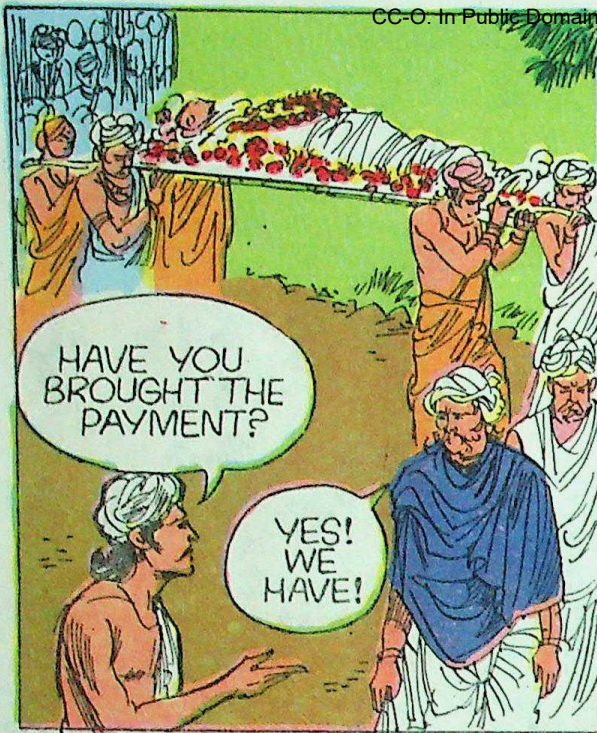
ALL RIGHT!
FOLLOW ME!



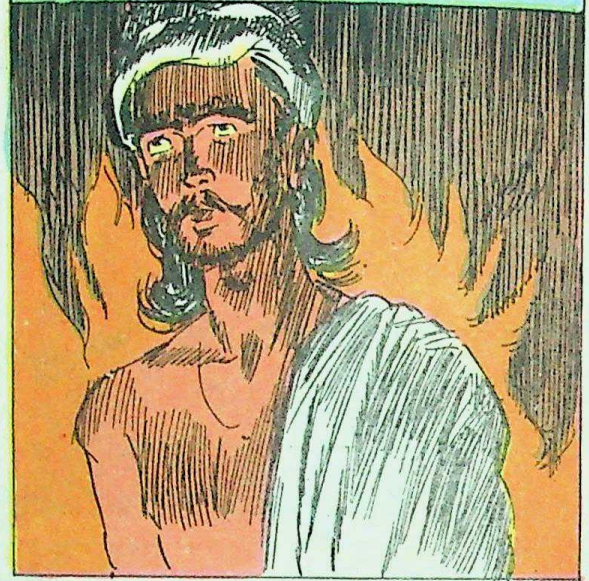
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AFTER PAYING VISHNAVHITRA HIS DAKSHINA, HARISCHANDRA WALKED WITH HIS NEW MASTER TO THE PLACE OF WORK.

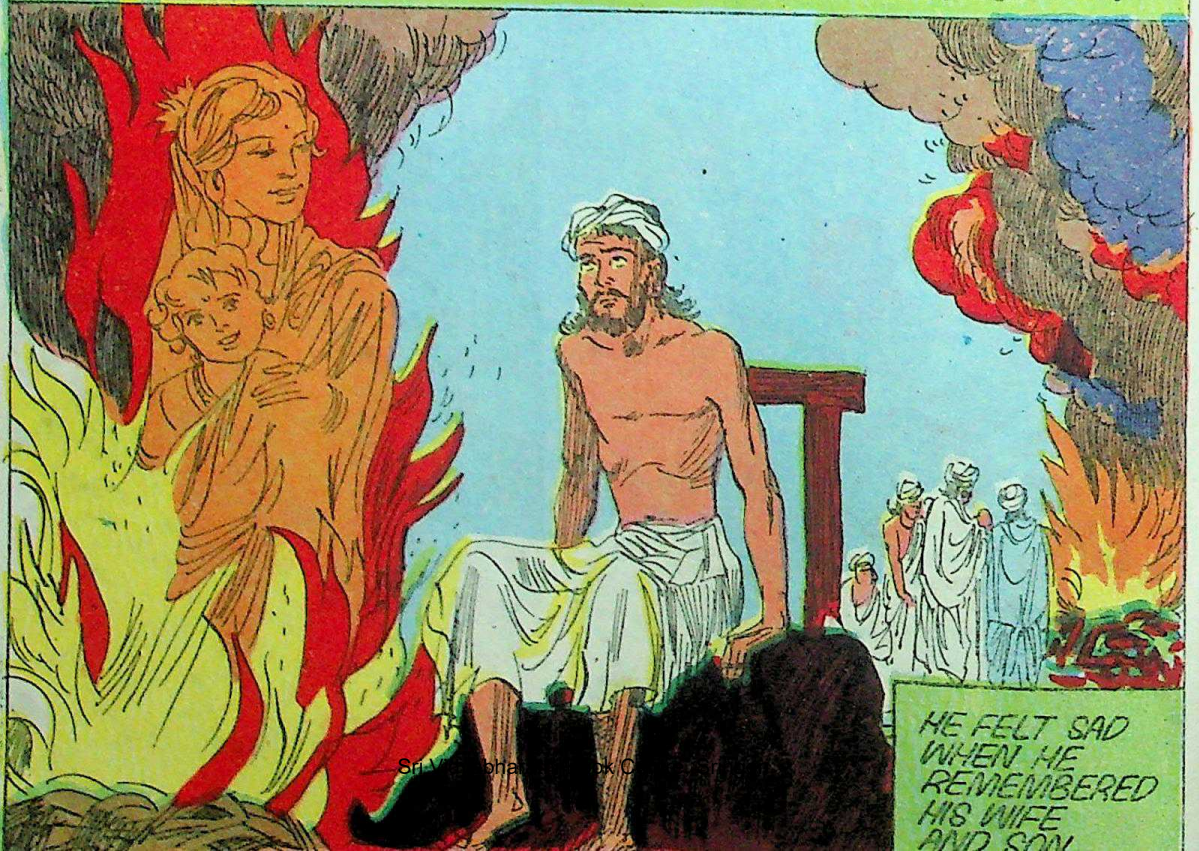




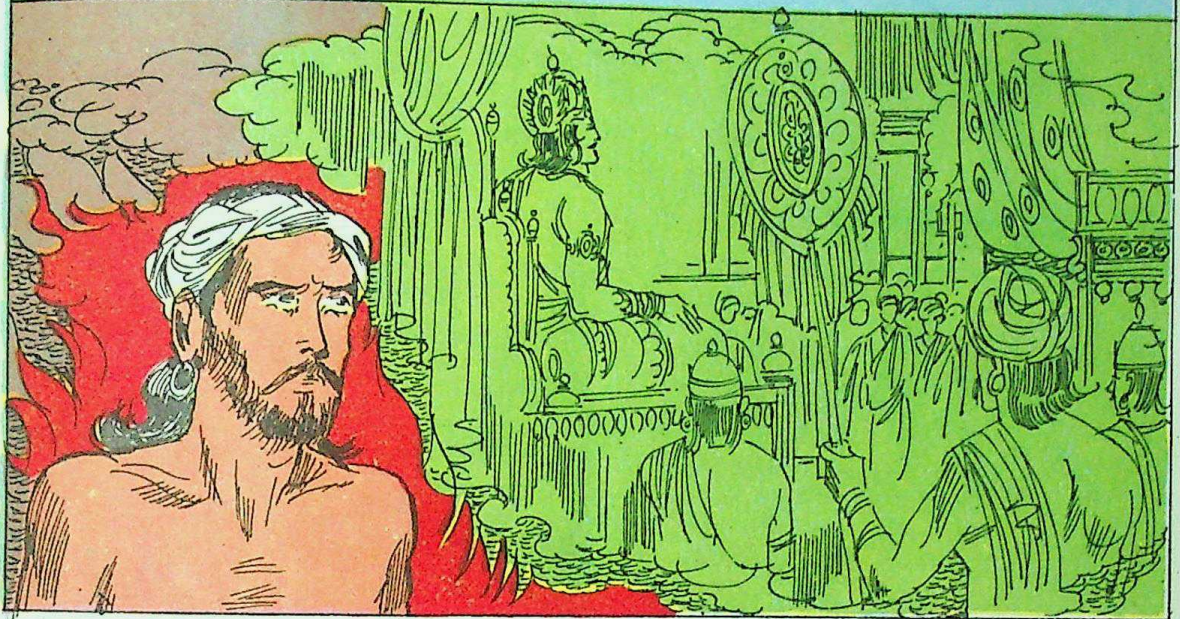
HARISCHANDRA'S DAYS PASSED COLLECTING MONEY FROM THE CREMATORS AND WATCHING THE FLAMES.



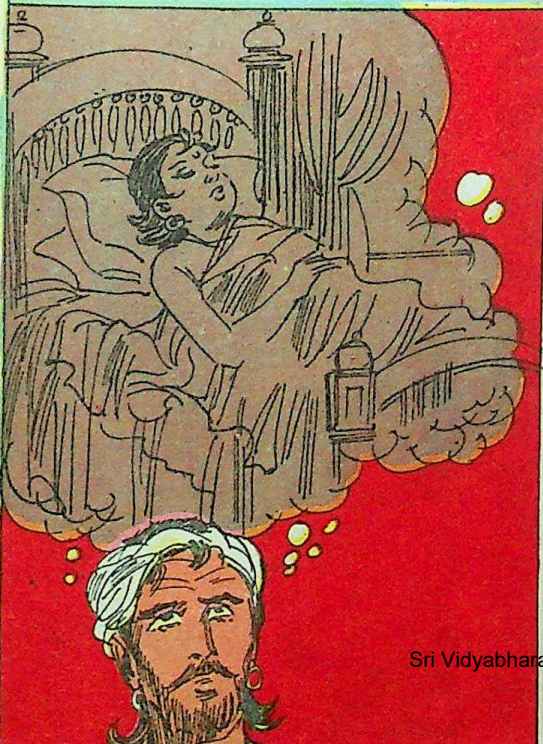
THE SIGHT OF THE PLAGE AND THE FLAMES SOON MADE HIS FACE CHANGE. HIS SKIN HAD SHRIVELLED. FEW COULD RECOGNISE HIM.



THE DAYS PASSED. THE KING WENT ON DOING HIS WORK. THE FIRE BURNT IN THE CREMATION GROUND. THE HEAT AND SMOKE WOULD MIST HARISCHANDRA'S EYES AND HE DREAMT OF HIS LOST KINGDOM.

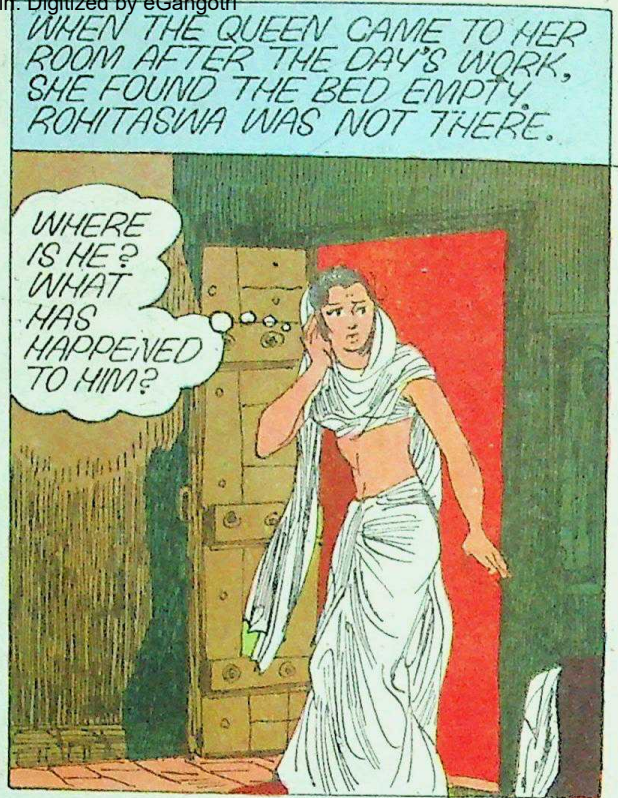


HE DREAMT OF THE LITTLE PRINCE ASLEEP ON HIS ROYAL BED. IT ALL SEEMED SO FAR AWAY.



MEANWHILE, THE QUEEN HAD TO WORK DAY AND NIGHT IN THE BRAHMAN'S HOUSEHOLD.



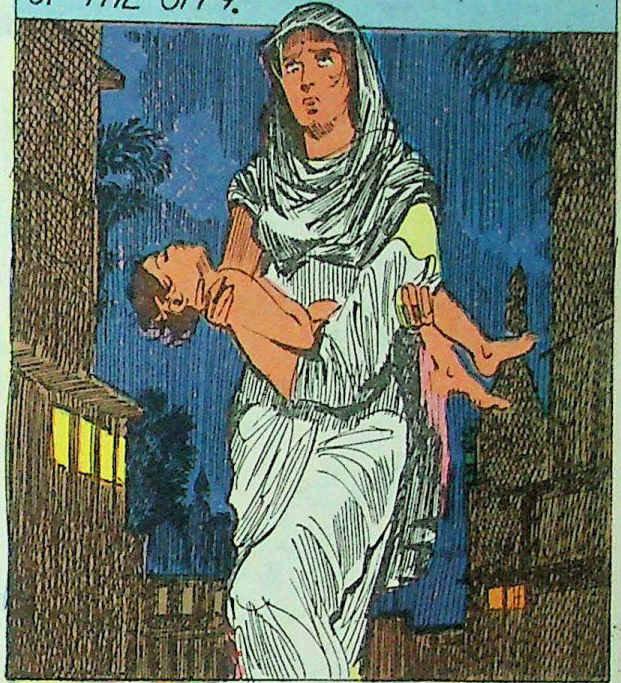


HER EYES FILLED WITH TEARS,
THE QUEEN CARRIED THE
DEAD CHILD BACK TO THE
HOUSE AND AWOKE THE
BRAHMAN.

MY SON IS DEAD.
PLEASE GIVE
ME SOME
MONEY FOR HIS
FUNERAL!

MONEY?
ISN'T IT
ENOUGH
THAT WE
FEED
YOU?

QUETLY, WITHOUT ANOTHER WORD,
THE QUEEN STARTED WALKING
THROUGH THE DESERTED STREET
OF THE CITY.



NEAR THE GATE OF THE
CREMATION GROUND, THE
BEARDED CHANDALA
BLOCKED HER WAY.

WHAT
DO YOU
WANT?

HARISCHANDRA COULD NOT SEE
THE WOMAN'S FACE WHICH WAS
COVERED BY A VEIL.

HAVE YOU
BROUGHT THE RICE
AND CASH?

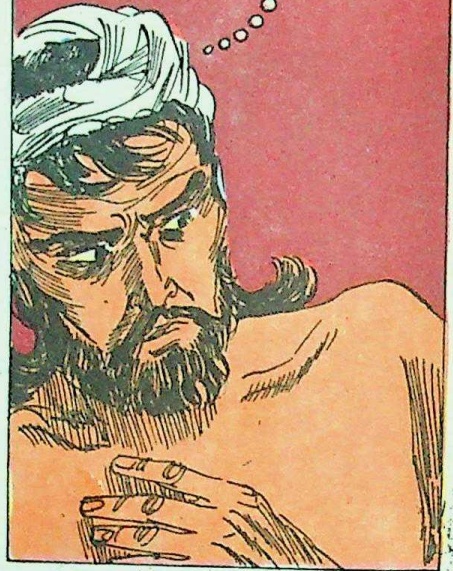
NO!

SUDDENLY HARISCHANDRA'S EYES FELL
ON THE DEAD CHILD'S FACE.



THE CHILD'S
FACE BEARS
THE MARK
OF ROYALTY!
WHO IS HE?

WHY IS
MY HEART
BEATING SO
FAST?



HE IS INDEED
A ROYAL CHILD!
HIS FATHER
WAS
HARISCHANDRA!

WHAT DID
YOU SAY?

MY SON!
MY SON!



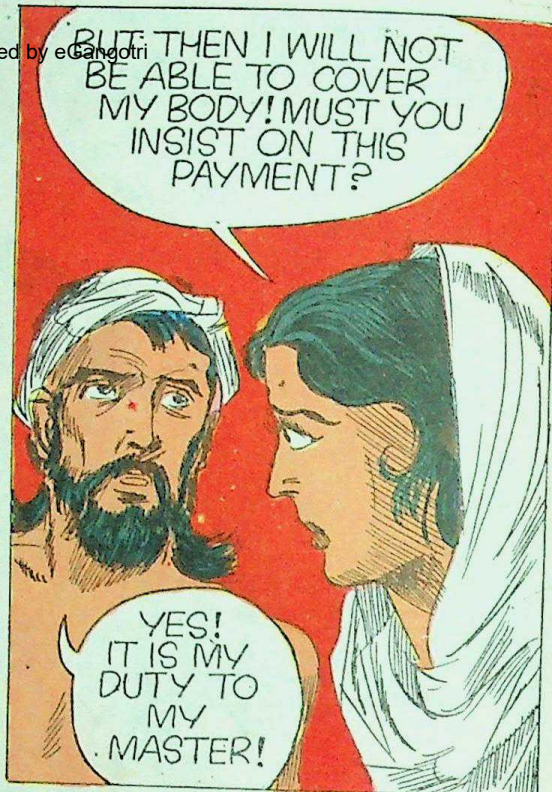
THE WOMAN WAS STARTLED WITH THE CRY THE VOICE SEEMED FAMILIAR. SHE PEERED CLOSE AT THE BEARDED, SHRIVELLED FACE.

WHY DID YOU CRY
OUT! LET ME LOOK AT
YOUR FACE... MY
HUSBAND!

YES! I'M THAT
WRETCHED MAN!
BUT YOU WILL HAVE
TO BRING THE
CLOTH AND RICE!

MY HUSBAND
WHO WAS A KING
IS NOW A CHANDALA?
YOU ARE ASKING THE
PAYMENT FOR
YOUR SON'S
FUNERAL?

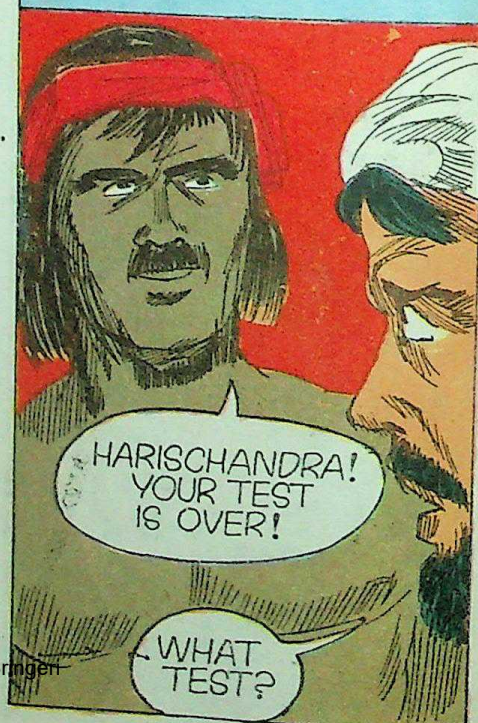
I HAVE
NO CHOICE!
I CANNOT
DEPRIVE MY
MASTER
OF HIS
DUES!



THEN A STRANGE THING HAPPENED. A HAND STOPPED HIM FROM TAKING THE CLOTH.

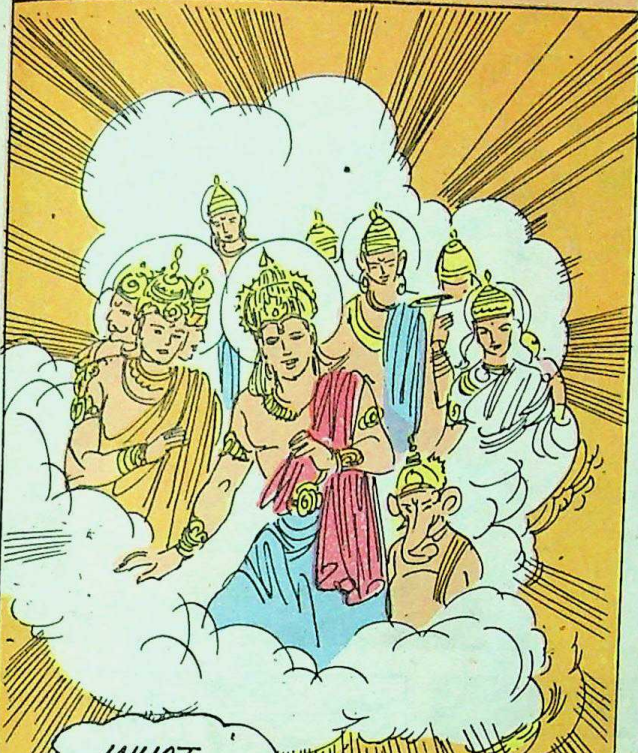


STARTLED, HARISCHANDRA TURNED ROUND. IT WAS THE CHANDALA.

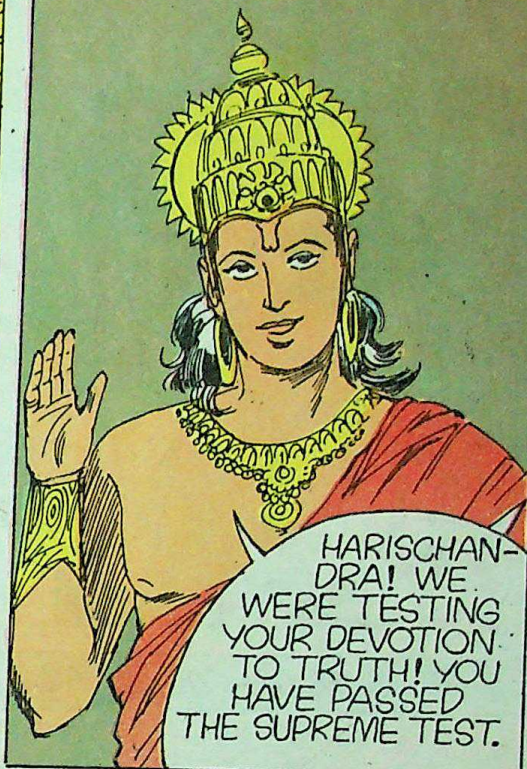
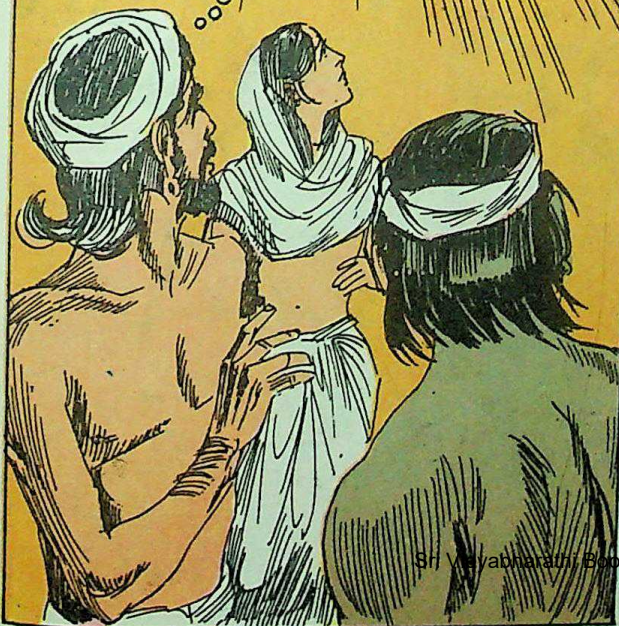


BEFORE THE CHANDALA COULD REPLY, HARISCHANDRA SAW A MAGNIFICENT SIGHT. THE DEVAS (HEAVENLY BEINGS) HAD COME DOWN TO SEE HIM.

THEN INDRA, THE KING OF THE DEVAS, CAME FORWARD.



WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?



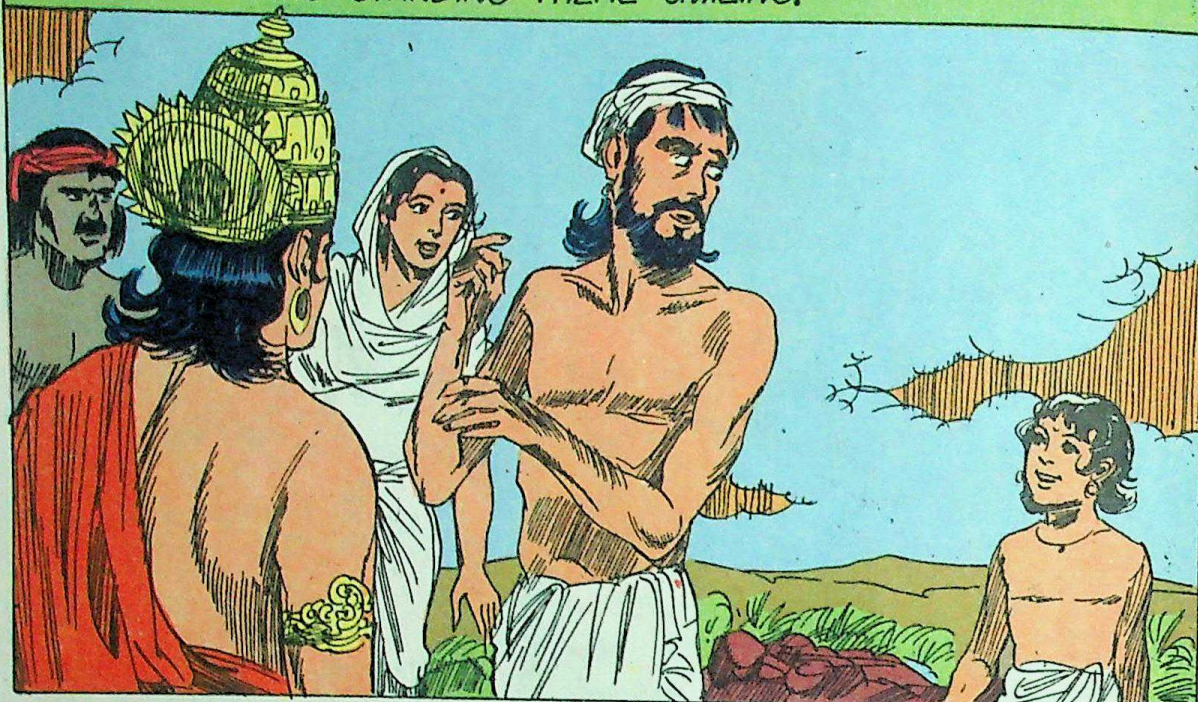
HARISCHANDRA! WE WERE TESTING YOUR DEVOTION TO TRUTH! YOU HAVE PASSED THE SUPREME TEST.

BUT, MY LORD, DID YOU HAVE TO TEST ME BY TAKING AWAY MY ONLY CHILD?



INDRA SMILED.

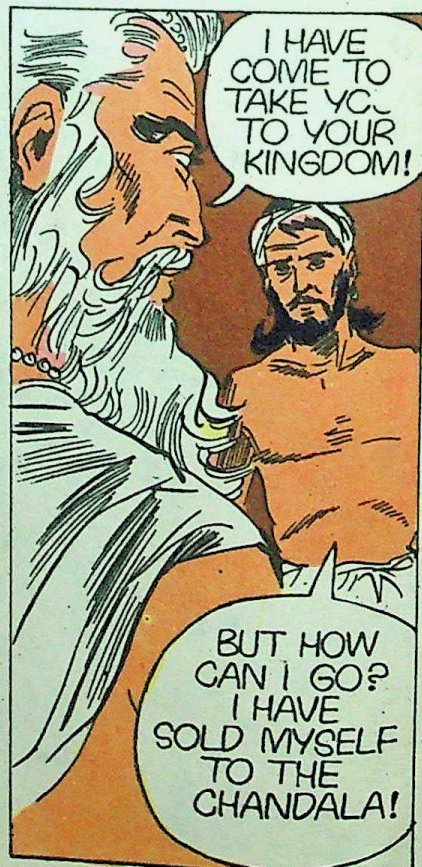
SEEING INDRA'S SMILE, THE PUZZLED KING TURNED HIS EYES TO WHERE HIS SON'S BODY LAY. HE SAW A STRANGE SIGHT. ROHITASINA WAS STANDING THERE SMILING.



THEN SOMEONE CALLED HIM SOFTLY.

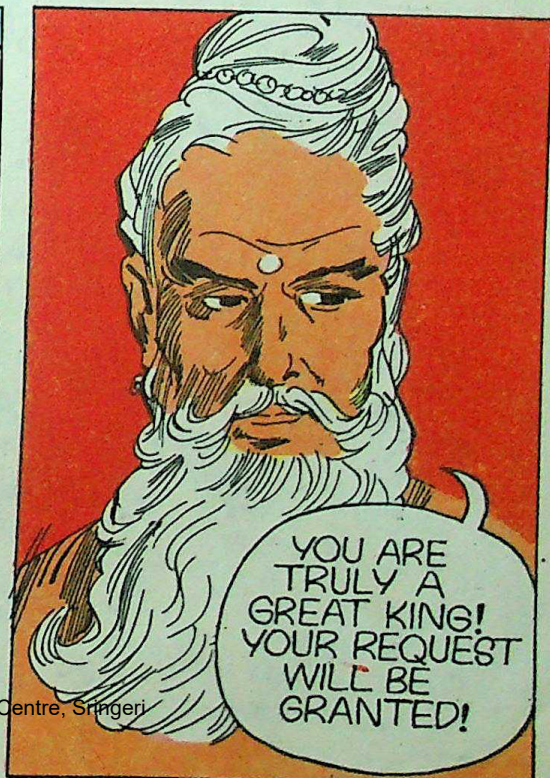
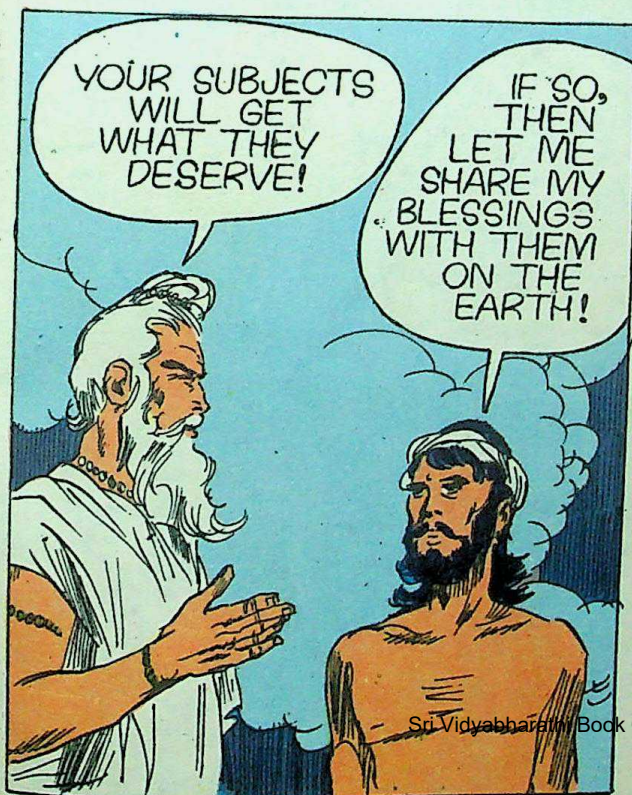
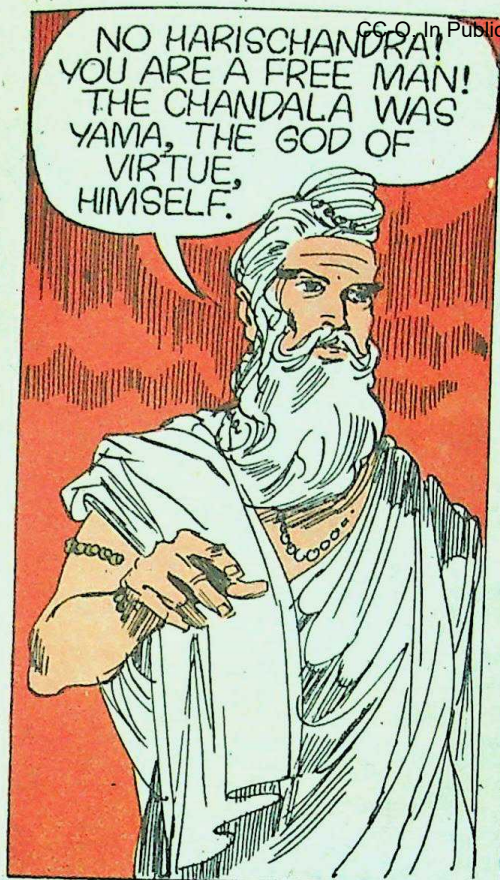
HARISCHANDRA! MY FRIEND, FORGIVE ME FOR TESTING YOU SO HARSHLY!

SAGE VISHWAMITRA?



I HAVE COME TO TAKE YOU TO YOUR KINGDOM!

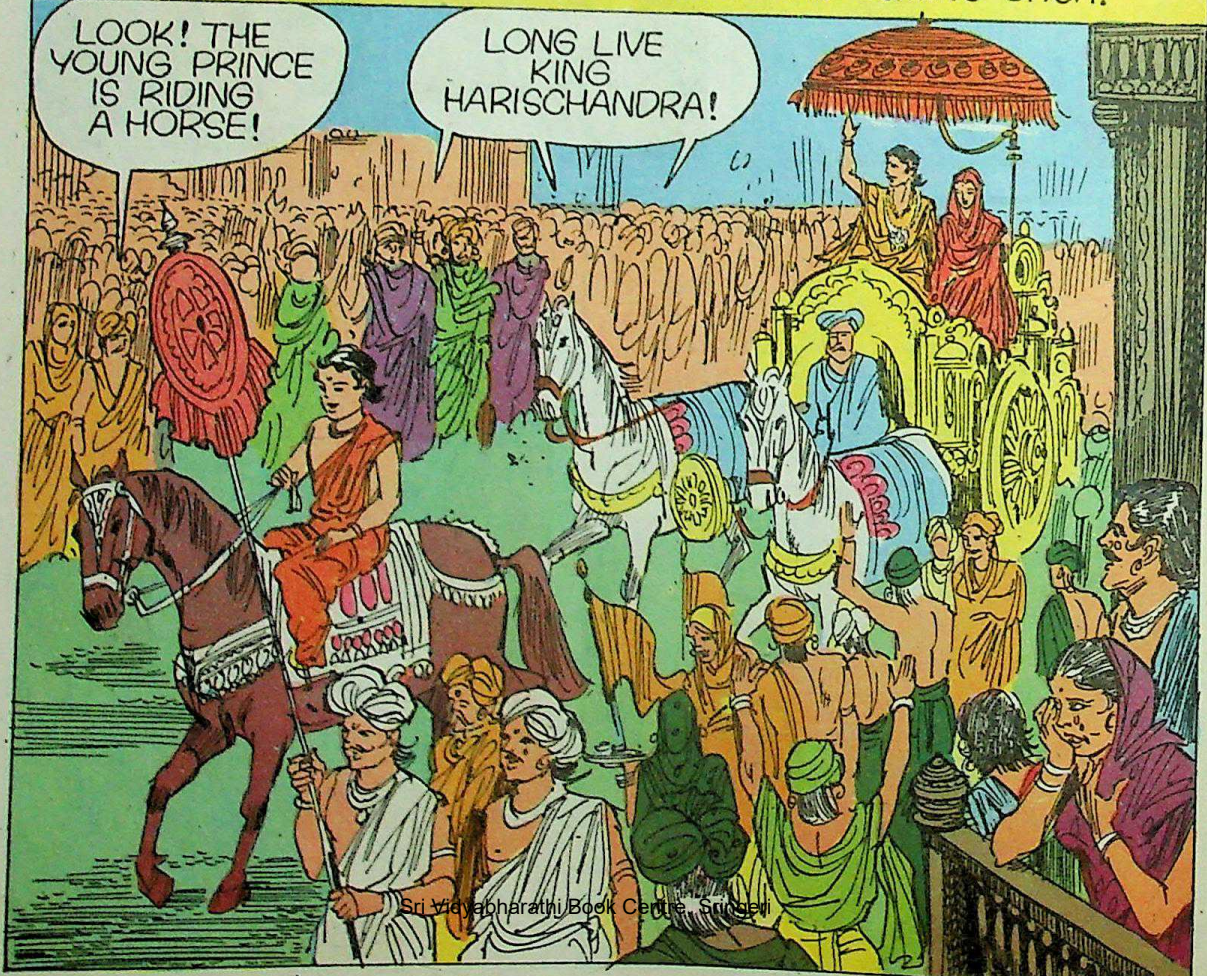
BUT HOW CAN I GO? I HAVE SOLD MYSELF TO THE CHANDALA!



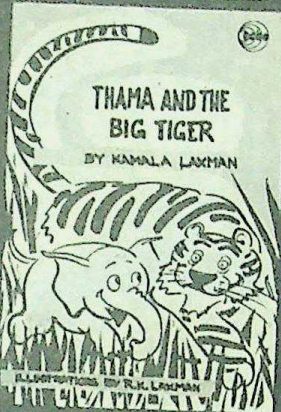
WORD HAD REACHED THE KINGDOM THAT THE KING WAS COMING BACK. PEOPLE CAME OUT OF THEIR HOUSES TO WELCOME THEIR KING.



THE STREETS WERE LINED BY PEOPLE. MANY WERE CRYING WITH JOY. THE KING WHOM THEY LOVED SO MUCH WAS COMING BACK.



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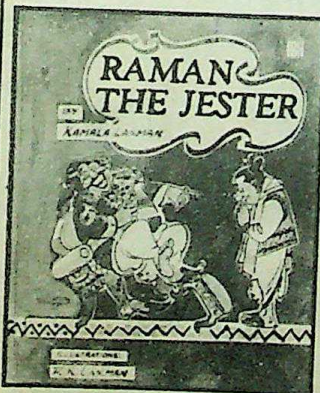
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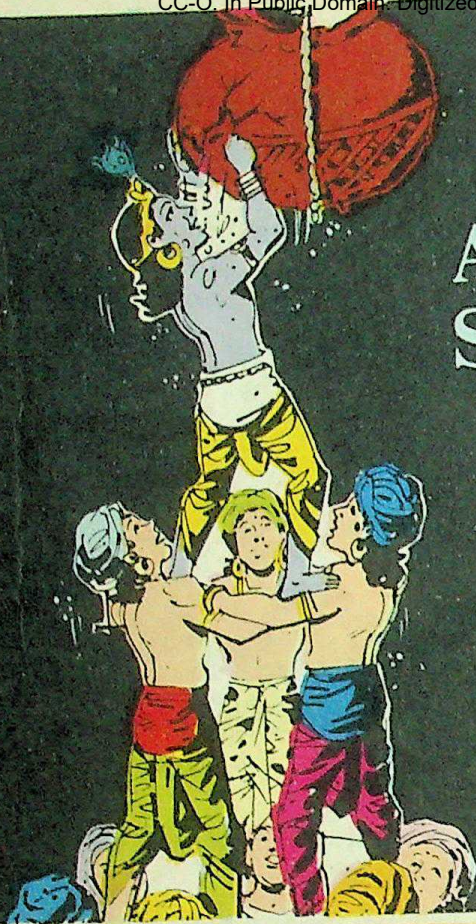
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